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On Mission Together

Week of Prayer for North American Missions

March 4-11, 2001

ANNIE
ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING®

FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

NATIONAL GOAL: \$50,000,000

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WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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Missionary is ready with helping hand

NEW ORLEANS (Special) — Just one block away from New Orleans' glitzy French Quarter district and glamorous Canal Street is the last place most thrill-seekers would step into when they're headed to "The city that care forgot" — where "Laissez les bon temps roulez" ("Let the good times roll") is the death-defying guiding force behind the actions of some men and women.

Many come only to indulge themselves completely in this city's strange mix of exotic cultures and European charm, neon lights and crystal chandeliers, 24-hour cafes, and world-renowned haute cuisine — along with readily accessible liquor and gambling. While some come honestly seeking a job in the area's non-stop tourist industry, eventually even for them the lure of totally unrestrained irresponsibility somehow becomes synonymous with fun.

When the supposed good times are long gone and friends have deserted them, Ginger Smith is waiting to take them in.

Smith, a featured missionary during the March 4-11 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, has

served since 1995 as social services coordinator at the Clovis L. Brantley Baptist Center.

Smith oversees the center's women's and children's

shelter, supervises the self-assessment phase of a Christian rehabilitation program, and leads Bible studies and classes on computer-skills, GED preparation, parenting skills, job readiness, and anger management. She also is the center's community referral and resource specialist.

Originally from Arkansas, Smith said she "always wanted to work with people, but didn't know exactly how God wanted to use me." No one in her family had ever been involved in vocational ministry — let alone inner-city social service ministry.

She first applied for summer missions service while still in high school. When she was approved to serve at an inner-city ministry center in Houston, Texas, it was a shock to her parents who told her she could not go.

However, they came around after a personal visit from veteran missionary Mildred McWhorter, the center's director.

"It was amazing to see how God worked all that out," Smith said. The three months went by safely, and when it was time to start her first year of college, Smith said, "I knew that my life had changed forever." She spent every summer of her four years in college doing a variety of mission projects, including two in U.S. inner-cities, one in a pioneer U.S. ministry area, and her final summer

"I really struggled about whether to go back to Hong Kong instead of going on to seminary," Smith said, but she

never had peace about it. Within 24 hours of her arrival at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, she had an interview to work at Brantley, "and I knew from the first day that I was going to work here, that this was my place of ministry."

She served a two-year internship at the center before becoming an appointed missionary of the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Smith is one of three NAMB missionaries at the Brantley Center, where "soup, soap, and salvation" continue to play important roles in the work of the New Orleans' only Southern Baptist homeless shelter, originally started in 1927.

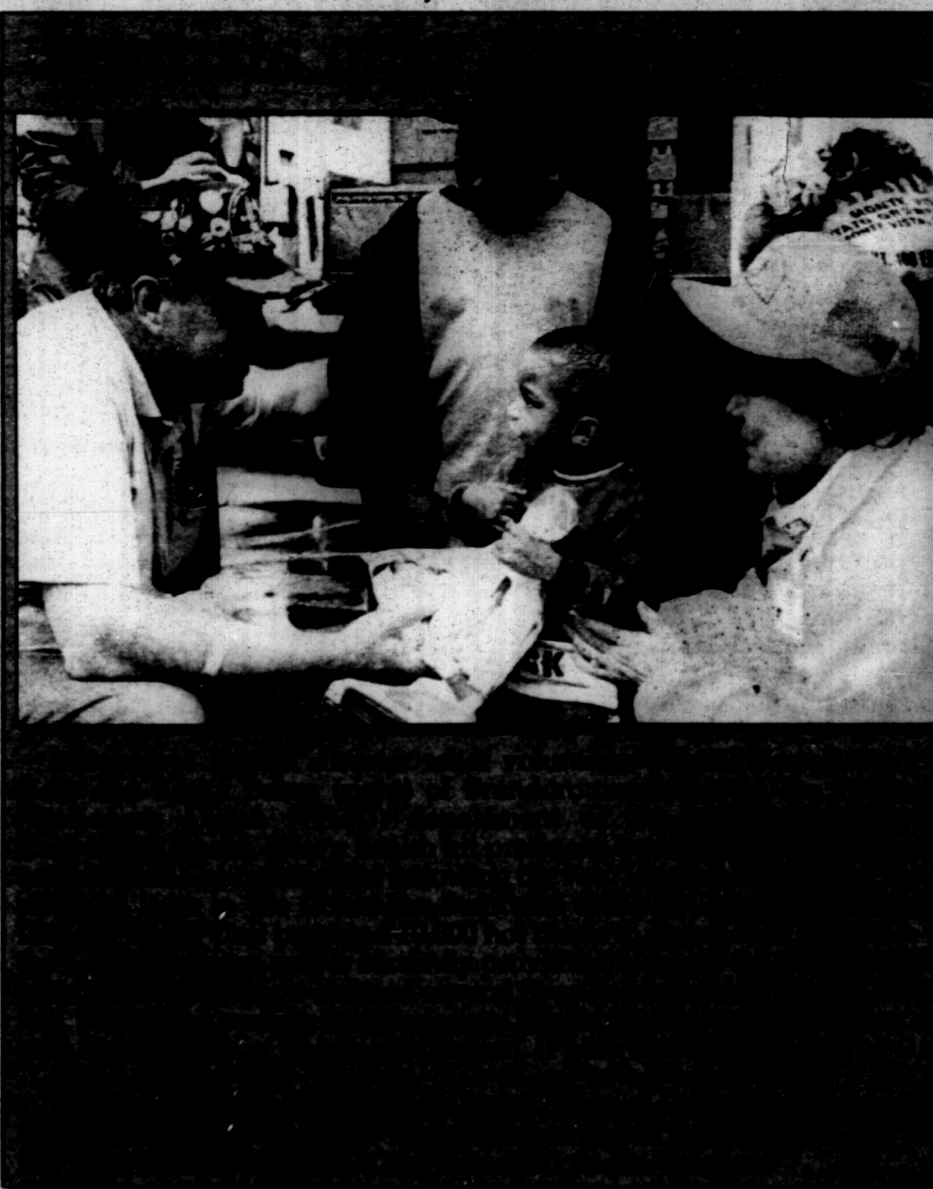
"Ginger has taught me you can't just read the Bible. You have to live it," said a fellow staffer at the center, who herself had endured the hardships of the streets.

"You can't say anything bad about Ginger," said one former homeless man now on staff. "She smiles even when she's mad. She never loses her cool. She is our Good Samaritan around here. We love her and we respect her."

"I keep reminding myself that I'm not here to be a social worker. I'm here to share the love of God with people, and that's not a discouraging job," Smith said.



SETTLING IN — Marvin Jones (left), from Hammond, La., talks with Ginger Smith in the men's dorm of the Brantley Baptist Center. The center's homeless shelter houses up to 230 guests each night. (Photo By Ted Jackson)



Blend provides missionary with job tools

TOPEKA, Kansas (Special) — A blending of old and new methods provides Randy Cowling with the tools he needs to direct missions at Kaw Valley Association in northeastern Kansas.

Meeting pastors over a cup of coffee is still the most personal way of remaining aware of the needs of churches, Cowling says. Yet, interacting with them online offers a new dimension of keeping churches informed of ministry opportunities.

It's all a part of the association's Acts 1:8 goal of "helping churches discover and fulfill God's purposes."

"Churches want more customized help for where they're at instead of one big Sunday School meeting to attend," Cowling said. "One church's situation with 25 people is different than another with 150," he explained.

Cowling and his wife, Doris, are featured missionaries during the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11.

Debbie Carter and Richard Taylor serve as associate directors of missions and team up with Cowling to form a partnership with 41 churches. The 12-county area encompasses the cities of Topeka and Lawrence. Instead of being

consultants with limited expertise, each one is assigned to 15

that draw five times the number of people. A core administrative

team meets every other month to supervise the work of the association.

"For the past four or five years we have pushed, pulled, prodded, and promoted the need for new churches and ministries across northeast Kansas," Cowling said. In spite of the energy, time, and resources expended, he said there was limited return.

Drawing from the Apostle

Paul's encouragement for Timothy to "fan the flame," Cowling said his staff refocused on helping churches discover and fulfill God's purposes. "We've discovered that ministry is popping up all over northeast Kansas, and we've got to just get out of the way and let God work," Cowling said, referring to the advice of Henry Blackaby in "Experiencing God."

"Ministries and churches begin from the grassroots," Cowling insisted. With the changing perspective has come exciting results. One church is developing Bible study for Hispanics as a result of providing food to area residents. Pastors of three additional churches identified similar needs and began meeting regularly to determine how to more effectively reach people for Christ. Multihousing communities provide the setting for social ministries that reach particular ethnic populations.

A cookie-cutter approach is inadequate, Cowling and his staff said. By getting to know each church's strengths and weaknesses, one of the associa-

tional ministers can determine which ones have similar needs that require particular resources. "We're taking partnership to a whole different level," Cowling said. "By building a team approach, the churches have seen that we're here to serve them."

In addition to discovering God's purposes in individual congregations, churches are cooperating to fulfill his goal for the region through missions. Sharing the Gospel with Native Americans is a key part of the association's ministry, ministering to three reservations with Potawatomi, Sac & Fox, and Kickapoo tribes.

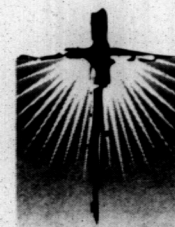
Discovering God's purpose for Kaw Valley Association has allowed the 41 churches to cooperate in starting three new con-

TEEN TIME — Randy (left) and Doris Cowling (second from left) chat with a new teenaged daughter Emily (second from right) and friend Brittani Johnson at Western Hills Church, where Doris is employed. (Photo By Gibbs Frazier)

of the churches within the association. By focusing on building a relationship with each church, the associational minister becomes a resource in every aspect of ministry.

With the majority of churches having a single staff person and many of those serving bivocationally, the varied needs demand a customized approach. "Now we can be hands-on facilitators," Cowling said of the new approach.

Since coming to Kansas five years ago, Cowling has encouraged the association to retool for greater effectiveness. Instead of 27 committees meeting occasionally, a streamlined association focuses on the broader categories of administration, missions and outreach, support, and enrichment. Quarterly board meetings with sparse attendance have given way to biannual worship and business sessions



MISSISSIPPI
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THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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gregations, including a Native American work, a home church, and a more traditional start.

"Who is in charge? It's not you or me, but it is our Creator whose masterful design is before us," he explained.



Looking back

10 years ago

The John Templeton Foundation has again honored Mississippi College by placing it on the 1991 Honor Roll of Character Building Colleges that includes 108 institutions throughout the country. Schools on this annual listing "best exemplify campuses that encourage the development of strong moral character among students."

20 years ago

Mississippi Baptists' first budget ever to call for more than \$1 million per month is almost on target after two months of this year as the total reaches \$2,093,832. "This is the second year in a row that missions gifts have been more than \$2 million for the first two months of the year," reports Earl Kelly, MBCB executive director-treasurer.

50 years ago

J.D. Holden, chief of police of Jackson, reports that of 6,781 arrests made in Jackson during 1950, 3,095 were drunks — another argument for why Mississippi should prohibit the sale of whiskey and also why Mississippi should enforce prohibition laws already on the books.

CHURCH TALK — Randy Cowling (left) talks with Kenneth Perkins (right) and Debbie Carter on the porch of Clay Street Church. Perkins is pastor of the church, and Carter is church and community ministries director for Kaw Valley Association. (Photo By Gibbs Frazier)

'00 Annie sets record

SHOCCO SPRINGS, Ala. (BP and local reports) — Receipts for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions jumped 11% in 2000 to \$48.4 million, the largest increase since 1982 and the eighth consecutive record offering.

The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) initiated the national offering to support SBC missionaries in the U.S. in 1895. In 1903, the offering was named in honor of WMU's founder, Annie Armstrong. More than \$800 million has been given to the offering during its 105-year history.

The record offering also surpassed the campaign's \$47 million goal by \$1.4 million, marking only the third time the goal has been exceeded in the past 20 years. The goal for 2001 is \$50 million.

The offering, all of which is used to support missionary personnel and their work, supplies more than one-third of the budget of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the SBC. The agency cooperates with state Baptist conventions in supporting 5,081 missionaries in the U.S. and Canada.

NAMB was created in 1997 when the resources of three former SBC agencies were combined — the Home Mission Board in Atlanta, the Radio and Television Commission in Ft. Worth, and the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis.

The primary responsibility of NAMB, as outlined in a policy statement, is to assist Southern Baptist churches in reaching the U.S., Canada, and U.S. territories with the Gospel.

Missionary discovering multihousing needs

Missionary chat set for March 4, 7

ALPHARETTA (BP) — Church groups and individuals will have the opportunity to participate in live online "chat" sessions with missionaries of the North American Mission Board March 4 and March 7 during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions.

The chats are part of an Internet-based collection of resources related to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) for North American missions at www.anniearmstrong.com.

The March 4 session will be held from 3-5 p.m. CST. A second session, ideal for mission groups, will be held from 5-10 p.m. CST on March 7. A listing of featured missionaries and times is available on the www.anniearmstrong.com Web site.

ATLANTA (Special) — When Chris McNairy sees an apartment building, he looks beyond the concrete walls and screened-in patios to the individuals inside as they eat dinner, watch television, and put their children to bed.

With a kind of spiritual X-ray vision he calculates how many residents call the dwelling home and wonders how many are facing life crises without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then he begins to dream of ways to reach beyond the walls with evangelistic ministries that bring the church to the residents in new and exciting ways.

McNairy has worn various hats in recent years — assistant to the pastor on a church staff, pastor, and leader of African-American ministries for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. His newest role as national missionary for the North American Mission Board brings him back to the love of his life — helping churches and associations start indigenous churches in multihousing communities. The category includes apartments, condominiums, assisted living, public housing, and manufactured housing.

McNairy is featured during the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11.

The soft-spoken native of Forrest City, Ark., hasn't always been so at ease with life. As a young man he became angry because strict vision requirements disqualified him from a career as a pilot while still in ROTC.

"That's when I decided to accept a full academic scholarship to Washington University in St. Louis to practice law. I was so angry, I wanted to go to law school and get rich and go into politics and cut the funding to the Air Force," he said with a halfway smile that still shows a hint of rejection. "I really wanted to fly."

That's not how things turned out. Before graduation he surrendered to the ministry and joined the staff of a National Baptist Convention church — the denomination in which he was raised — where he learned to manage weekday ministries. Then he embraced Southern Baptists when he joined a Praxis church-starting team starting Sunday Schools in St. Louis multifamily housing units.

After completing his master's degree he moved to Tennessee to seek a public service

job and find a way of meeting his growing desire for ministry. He joined West Haven Church in suburban Memphis, and was soon working two jobs — at the church by day as minister of community ministries, and as a night shift janitor at McDonald's.

West Haven was located in a transitional community undergoing radical social change. White flight was pulling Anglo residents to the suburbs and African-American homeowners were moving in to take their places. The former bastion of 35 Southern Baptist churches had been reduced to only two. When McNairy arrived on the scene, West Haven had begun its ministry in a former Anglo church with less than a hundred members in a worship center that once sat 700 people.

Eventually he became pastor and began to look at ways the small congregation could reach the community.

"We began prayer-walking the area before we knew what it was called," he said. "We just started walking around the neighborhood, making mental notes of what we saw, and asking God how we could reach the people. We were wondering how our churches could be dying if there were so many people moving in."

"What we discovered was that there were 12 privately owned multifamily housing communities with 13,000 residents and no church. The striking thing to me is that was the population of my hometown, which had 12 churches."

"After completing some surveys we also learned something else — that none of the residents wanted to come to our nice brick building, but they did say they would attend church if it was in their community," he adds.

That's when McNairy began doing what many said was impossible, and he's still doing it to this day — starting churches in multifamily housing settings where people say it can't be done. Plus, he did it in partnership with the local association.

"I've heard all of the excuses why it can't be done, but the fact remains that within a few short years we and the Shelby Association had missions and satellite ministries in 40 multifamily housing locations that were donated to us absolutely free. That space would have cost us \$35,000 a month if we were renting it on the open market," he said.

McNairy has since become an evangelist of sorts for multifamily housing ministry as he spreads the word on how to take Christ to what are perceived as closed communities.

"Relationships. That's the key word to being successful in this ministry," he said matter-of-factly. "Without a relationship with the apartment manager and owner, you'll never get your foot in the door."

Multifamily housing includes more than just apartments, McNairy is quick to point out. It includes residents of gated communities and manufactured housing communities.

McNairy has an impressive track record and he wants to share his knowledge with others. His facts are sobering:

- The number of people in apartments has more than doubled in the last 25 years.
- One in 16 Americans live in manufactured housing.



STARTING CHURCHES — Steve Fowler (right), director of missions for the 21-county Northland Association based in Roscommon, Mich., talks with Chris McNairy about starting churches to reach multifamily housing residents in the association. (Photo by Joe Westbury)



PRIME SPOT — Chris McNairy (left) and Jackie Carroll survey a manufactured housing community in Tawas, Mich., where they would like to start a Bible study. Carroll is multihousing ministry team leader for East Tawas Church, which already has a ministry in Bay Park Tower North, a high-rise housing complex. (Photo by Joe Westbury)

- Between four- and eight-million Americans live in private, upscale gated communities.

- One in 10 private apartment community households has an income of more than \$50,000 a year.

- 122,700,000 Americans, or 45 percent of the nation's population, live in multifamily housing.

- More than 90 percent of those residents are unchurched; only five percent attend any church.

McNairy fights the stereotypes that multifamily housing residents are poor or lower income.

"I'm an example of someone who has lived in multifamily housing all of his life. In the parking lot outside my window I see every make of car from beat-up Chevrolets to shiny new Jaguars. There are young singles and senior citizens in their second and third careers. There are residents of every imaginable race. Each complex is a small multicultural city in and of itself."

"Did you know that the average town in Tennessee has 3,000 residents and a dozen churches, yet a multifamily housing complex with 700 units — about 3,000 residents — will not have one church?"

"When we look at our dysfunctional families, the lack of moral fiber in our youth, and rampant drug abuse across the socio-economic spectrum, we have to realize that we have huge pockets of would-be communities with no church."

"If we are going to reach North America for Christ, we are going to have to address the nearly 50 percent of our population that lives in multifamily housing," McNairy concluded. "They are waiting to hear from us; when are we going to go to them?"

Coward set to lead Blue Mountain College

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Bettye Rogers Coward of Clinton, academic vice-president at Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton, was unanimously selected February 23 by the Blue Mountain College (BMC) board of trustees to serve as the seventh president of the 128-year old, Baptist-affiliated school located in Blue Mountain.

"I understand and embrace the role of Christian colleges in preparing graduates whose lives will reflect a faith-based educational experience."

"Joining with the constituents of this fine institution to continue the rich tradition of preparing community and denominational leaders is an opportunity I eagerly anticipate," Coward, 57, said in a press release prepared by the college.

Coward has also served as professor, chair, and acting chair of the MC depart-

ment of family and consumer sciences and health education.

Coward, who was born in Hattiesburg and grew up in Collins, is a graduate of Jones County Junior College in Laurel (AA '63);



Coward

Mississippi University for Women in Columbus (BS '65), and the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg (MS '66, Ed.D. '76). She received her doctorate in higher education administration.

Coward was selected by MC faculty and students as the school's Distinguished Professor in 1990, and was recognized by the 1991 Mississippi Legislature as the outstanding faculty member at MC.

BMC is a four-year liberal arts undergraduate college for women supported by the Mississippi Baptist

Convention. The school offers a Christian education for women with a coordinate

academic program for men preparing for church-related vocations.

Coward replaces E. Harold Fisher, who is retiring after 35 years at the helm of the approximately 400- student school located in Tippah County in north Mississippi.

"Blue Mountain College is an outstanding college, and I am certain Dr. Coward will build on the solid foundation and will lead the college to new and greater heights," Fisher said.

"We are certainly delighted that Dr. Bettye Coward has agreed to serve as Blue Mountain College's seventh president and are especially excited about the gifts she brings to the job which are reflected in her wonderful teaching and administration at Mississippi College," said Heywood Washburn of Tupelo, chair of the school's board of trustees.

Linda Gholston of Grenada, who chaired the search committee that recommended Coward, told trustees that the search committee was impressed with Coward's passion for Christian higher education and her commitment to excellence.

Coward and her husband Tom are members of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton, and the parents of one adult daughter.

FLAG

Our state Legislature has handed to us the responsibility of choosing one of two cloth banners to be our state flag.

The word flag has differing meanings. If you look up the definition you will find that flag is a noun that refers to a banner, or a piece of cloth, that represents a people or an idea. You will also find that flag is a possible verb, referring to someone who is getting tired.

I guess it could be said, for many of us here in Mississippi, that both definitions are applicable to us as we approach April 17 — voting day!

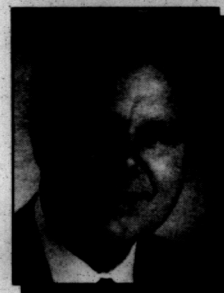
Virtually everyone in the state has an opinion about the old and the proposed new state flags. According to the pollsters, Mississippians are divided over the flag, leaning toward keeping the 1894 version.

Not only do Mississippians have an opinion about the flag, or flags, they also have strong feelings about people who have opinions about the flag.

Some people, who have opinions about the flag and about other's opinions, feel that nobody else should have an opinion! Certainly, ministers should not have an opinion about the flag, nor should governmental, academic, or athletic leaders. But, they all do — as well they should!

So how is it that a piece of cloth, regardless of the color or configuration, can engender such deep emotions? The old flag, or what is considered to be the present state flag of Mississippi, stirs deep emotions in two areas of life:

• **The emotions of past history:** In the upper left-hand corner of the flag is the emblem of what most consid-



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

er to be the flag of the Confederacy.

Some across the state can trace their heritage to family members who fought and died for that cause. Though the war was lost, the flag has continued to live. For some, it represents the living memory of their dead family members.

• **The emotions of present independence:** The other element of emotion that is stirred within Mississippians is that the flag may represent our fierce independence. It probably is an element that exists in every person and every state, but in Mississippi we just don't like outsiders (foreigners) telling us what to do!

At times, no doubt, we have carried this to the extreme and it has been simply hardheaded, cussed rebellion on our part, but we figure that this is "my land," "my house," "my town," "my street," and "my-whatever," and I can do with it as I please!

But, that emotional symbolism is not shared by everyone, and understandably so. For some Mississippians that symbol conveys hurt and pain, because that part of the flag that was representative of the "old south" was wrapped around organizations whose goal was to hurt, hate, and suppress other people.

While waving that banner, churches were burned, homes

destroyed, and people killed. For those whose families were wrecked and ruined in the shadow of that banner, it is understandable why it is the symbol of pain.

Several years ago I visited the killing camps of Hitler's Nazis at Auschwitz and Birkenau. Many of the records have been lost or destroyed, but somewhere around a million people were abused, misused, tortured, killed, and burned under a simple banner of red, white, and black with an angular emblem in the center called a swastika.

The design of that emblem was creative and artistic, but now it is a classic representation of hate! While my family was never directly affected by the people who waved that banner, I stood and watched as family groups would come to the furnaces where their loved ones were annihilated and their uncontrolled tears moved my heart. The sight of that symbol broke their hearts.

So what could or should be said about the new proposed flag design? Some like it, some do not. Some think it is appealing and some think it is unattractive.

It does have some positive, educational features about it. The cluster of 20 stars in the corner, with one being larger than the rest, indicates that Mississippi was the 20th state to come into the Union. The combination of red, white,

and blue, like that of Old Glory with all of the symbolism attached, is appealing.

The circle of 13 stars represents the 13 states, and the inner circle of six stars indicates the different flags that have flown over Mississippi, all of which are not without significance. The inclusive nature of a circle could be important and significant, if we are a state that is inclusive of all people.

The proposed flag has only been around for a few months, and therefore has had little or no chance to be historically important, but it could be.

I was asked by someone several weeks ago, "Do you believe God cares what our state flag looks like?" "No," I replied, "I doubt that he does! But, I do know that he deeply cares about the way we treat each other, speak to each other, and care for one another."

Your action in the voting booth on April 17 will be important. Your attitude on the way to vote is equally important. How can we prepare and participate?

1. Express your feelings and opinions with respect and consideration of others.

2. Be open to the views and differing opinions of others.

3. Pray that God will guide us as we vote. Many Mississippians actually do believe that God cares about the daily affairs of his people.

4. Vote for the flag that will be the most meaningful for Mississippi's future. One person said to me, "It is the choice of the lesser of two evils!" I choose to think it can be the better of two futures.

Disaster needs remain in Columbus area

As the disaster relief focus shifts from the Columbus area that was pounded by storms on February 16 to the Pontotoc area where five people died in a February 24 tornado, many disaster relief needs remain in the Columbus area. Those needs include debris removal and other manual labor, and First Church, Columbus, is recruiting volunteers to help local residents. People interested in providing assistance in the Columbus area are urged to contact Johnny Presley at First Church, Columbus, at (662) 328-8955, or (662) 328-3915. For full coverage of the Mississippi Baptist disaster relief response, see next week's issue of The Baptist Record.

Sunday School to sponsor FAITH meet

The Sunday School Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is sponsoring a FAITH Awareness Meeting at Trinity Church, Southaven, on March 5, from 1-3 p.m. The meeting is free of charge.

FAITH is an ongoing, comprehensive evangelism, ministry, and assimilation strategy that functions through the Sunday School. Participants learn a simple yet powerful gospel presentation, then visit prospects and members for their own class and department. Churches using the FAITH strategy report more professions of faith, increased baptisms, increased Sunday School enrollment and attendance, stronger assimilation of new members, and a maturing faith for participants.

For more information, contact David Williams, director of the MBCB Sunday School Department, at (601) 292-3298. E-mail: dwills@mbcb.org.

Additional information can be found at LifeWay Church Resources at (877) 324-8498 or on the web at www.life-way.com/sundayschool/faith.

LifeWay trustees hear reports at meeting

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Progress reports in ministry areas throughout LifeWay Christian Resources were the focus for trustees of the Southern Baptist agency during their Feb. 12-13 semiannual meeting in Nashville.

Among major reports were the upcoming 100th LifeWay Christian Store location during the national chain's 75th year; an update on revitalization of LifeWay's two national conference centers; popular titles published by Broadman & Holman Publishers; and progress in the LifeWay Church Resources division change process.

Gene Mims, president of the LifeWay Church Resources division, said the "church-focused" structure will work toward "an achievable future of 1 million people being baptized in the waters of our churches. We want to satisfy the needs of the churches and not just the need for a product. Churches will find in us resources — not just products, but resources. We want to go deeper into the relationship."

The division organization to be implemented by Oct. 1 will include four areas: church relations, solutions, capabilities, and organizational performance.

A partnership between LifeWay and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to work with churches in starting 100,000 new Bible study units also was announced.

"If you're going to grow a church, you've got to start new units and you've got to keep them healthy," said Bill Taylor, director of LifeWay's Sunday School group.

Richard Harris, vice president of NAMB's church planting group, said the effort also will include state convention and associational leaders.

"It ought to be a no-brainer that we work together. We've got to go out with the message that Jesus can help you put the pieces of your life back together," he said.

Mark Scott, president of LifeWay Christian Stores, told trustees, "God is at work" through the national chain. "We continue to achieve significant growth and strong operating results, but the real story is in the ministry behind the numbers," he said.

Scott said three new stores opened during October and November 2000 in Conyers, Ga.; Paducah, Ky.; and Katy, Tex. The store at New Orleans Seminary was remodeled during the fall.

A store to be opened in Knoxville, Tenn., in June will be the 100th location in the chain.

Mike Arrington, vice president of the corporate affairs division, told trustees that LifeWay conference center priority issues for the year are construction of a chapel and hotel at LifeWay Ridgecrest (N.C.) — among the first steps in the revitalization of both centers.

An initial master plan for LifeWay Glorieta (N.M.) was unveiled. Construction of Rutland Chapel at Ridgecrest begins in March, with completion expected in December 2001. Construction of a hotel with conferencing space will begin in May, with completion scheduled for June 2002.

Arrington reported that the conference centers hosted more than 106,000 guests last year. More than 1,200 campers attended Camp Crestridge for Girls and Camp Ridgecrest for Boys, and 18,000 teenagers were involved in youth events.

Ken Stephens, president of Broadman & Holman Publishers, said a strong first quarter in book sales for 2001-2002 follows a year in which

they supplied customers with approximately 4 million Bibles and 3.5 million trade books.

Best-selling volumes for 2000 included Payne Stewart: The Authorized Biography, 400,000 copies; Praying God's Word by Beth Moore, 144,000 copies; and another book by Moore, Breaking Free, 74,000 copies.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible New Testament is in stores now, and the complete Bible is on schedule to be available in 2003, Stephens said.

Ted Warren, executive vice president and chief operating officer for LifeWay, told trustees strategic planning, an annual process at LifeWay, signals that "we think ahead more than just what is coming the next day." However, he said an

envisioned future requires five to 10 years to complete, and "requires extraordinary effort."

"Our vision is not our man-made dreams," he concluded, "but the presence of God."

Luis Aranguren, director of LifeWay's international department, said 430 distributors are now selling LifeWay resources in 60 countries. Approximately 90 volunteer consultants have been trained to lead discipleship conferences using LifeWay resources in Spanish-speaking and English-speaking countries.

Tim Vineyard, director of the e-business group, said positive responses are being received from recent revamping of Internet sites to better meet customer needs.

Considering a Career Helping Others?



OpenHouse

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If you are considering a career in the exciting health care field, you should know that there's an extraordinary school not far from you that is one of the region's best. Baptist College of Health Sciences in Memphis provides high-quality, baccalaureate programs in nursing, radiological

sciences and respiratory care - in a unique, faith-based environment. Discover higher education with a higher purpose.

To register for one of our Information Sessions, please call (901) 227-4330 or 1-800-796-7171.

Saturday, March 3 - 10 a.m. • Thursday, March 29 - 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 7 - 10 a.m. • Tuesday, April 24 - 6:30 p.m.

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—THE BAPTIST RECORD

Meeting needs key part of new NAMB resource

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — The North American Mission Board (NAMB) commitment to meeting human needs as an essential element of its evangelism strategy is being reinforced with the introduction of a new resource to make it easier for churches to implement a broad range of ministry initiatives.

"His Heart, Our Hands: A Ministry Evangelism Toolkit," released in early February, combines a comprehensive introduction to ministry evangelism as well as specific examples and detailed action plans for a variety of proven ministries. Ministry evangelism includes everything from conventional food pantries and benevolence ministries to literacy missions, after-school tutoring, felt-need conferences, transportation ministries, and pregnancy care centers.

"Every church of any size in every kind of location can be involved in ministry-based evangelism," said John Yarbrough, NAMB's vice president for evangelization. "The Ministry Evangelism Toolkit is designed to assist the church to put simple handles on the

challenge of 'meeting needs, sharing Christ.'"

Yarbrough noted the agency continues to assist nearly 90 community ministry centers across the country that are doing "tremendous work" in impacting their areas with the gospel. "However, the 45,000 SBC churches and missions are all ministry centers. If we can assist these churches to effectively meet needs and share Christ — wow, what an army of compassion!"

"Basically this is an Acts 1:8 strategy," added Jerry Pipes, NAMB's director of ministry evangelism. "This is mobilizing every Southern Baptist

church to determine their Jerusalem, to equip them to discover every person who lives in their area of influence, and then to share Christ with them at the point of their need.

"While there will be a lot of people who are ready to respond to the gospel, there will be a lot of others who will need a relational bridge built through ministry."

"His Heart Our Hands: The Complete Ministry Evangelism Toolkit" is available at a cost of \$39.95 through LifeWay Christian Services at (800) 448-8032 or through LifeWay Christian Stores.



JUST FOR THE RECORD



Grace Church, Philadelphia, recently had their annual Children's Retreat at Camp Dixon in Neshoba County. Dennis Duvall is pastor.

Jesse E. Price dies Jan. 26

Jesse Eugene Price, 74, of McComb, died Jan. 26 at his residence. He was a member of North McComb Church, McComb, where he served as minister of music for 17 years before his retirement in 1995. He also served as minister of music at Central Church, McComb, for 8 1/2 years. Price was a graduate of Southwest Mississippi Junior College, Mississippi College, and New Orleans Seminary.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Carolyn Thornhill Price of McComb; daughter, Brenda Belaga-Price of Pineville, La.; sons, Brian Price of Madison and Barry Price of Fairbanks, Alaska; brother, Carlton Price of Ft. Worth, Texas; sister, Rebecca Bellipanni of McComb; and grandsons, Will and Max Price of Madison.

Baptist Health Systems has announced that Jerry L. Jones of Brandon has been named director of Human Resources (HR). Jones goes to Baptist from Jitney Jungle Stores of America, where he served in a variety of positions since 1981. Most recently, he served as Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Loss Prevention. Jones is a graduate of High Point University in North Carolina. He holds certifications in a number of HR-related issues, including Employee Relations Law, Total Quality Management, and Positive Employee Relations. Jones has served as chairman of the building committee at Castlewoods Church in Brandon.



Jones

Calvary Church, New Augusta, will host the Gospel Echoes and Tim Frith on March 10, at 7 p.m. The Luther K. Turner Memorial Day will be March 11 at 10 a.m. Terry Joe Terrell and La Briska Boose will be singing on April 14, at 7 p.m.

First Church, Belzoni, will celebrate its 115 years of ministry on March 25. The morning worship service will be at 10 a.m. and lunch will follow. The 6 p.m. service will be a service of song and praise. William Perkins, editor of The Baptist Record, will give the morning message. Perkins is from Belzoni and First Church is his home church. George C. Johnson is pastor.

The Women on Mission and the Women's Enrichment Ministries of First Church, Richton, will host Kay DeKalb Smith, conference speaker, 6:30 p.m. on March 10. For additional information, contact the church office at (601) 788-9607 or Lois Bell at (601) 784-3764.

Bethel Church, Bogue Chitto, will conduct a series of revival meetings beginning on March 11 at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. and continuing Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m. The guest speaker will be Jim Chester from Slidell, La. Chester is an illusionist who uses his gift to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Eric Malone, minister of music at Bethel Church, will lead the music.

Mark Schultz will be in concert at Fifteenth Avenue Church, Meridian, on March 4 at 6 p.m. Call (601) 485-4113 for more information.

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Single WOW, a spiritually exciting weekend for single adults, will be held at Temple Church, Hattiesburg, March 2-4. For additional information, contact the church at (601) 544-1794.

The Cross Ministry presents a spectacular, life-changing event. "The Crucifixion and Death of a Man called Jesus" will be presented at First Church, Batesville, 11 a.m. on March 11 and 7 p.m. on April 13.

Derma Church, Derma, held a ground breaking service for its new sanctuary. The service took place on Feb. 11 during the

morning worship service and was followed by dinner on the grounds. The church raised \$211,000 to go toward the building fund. Deacon and steering committee members pictured (from left, back row) are Dan Parker; Kenny Dismuke; Johnny Langford; David Mitchell; A. D. Blount; Billy W. Parker; Mark McNeese, church bondsman; and Dale Bailey; (front row) Thomas Langford; Dock Gabbert; Eddie Bollinger; Chris Aldridge, pastor; Mark Harrelson, chairman; Beverly Hannaford; Debbie Parker; David Lee; and James Wright.



Ground breaking service at Derma Church, Derma

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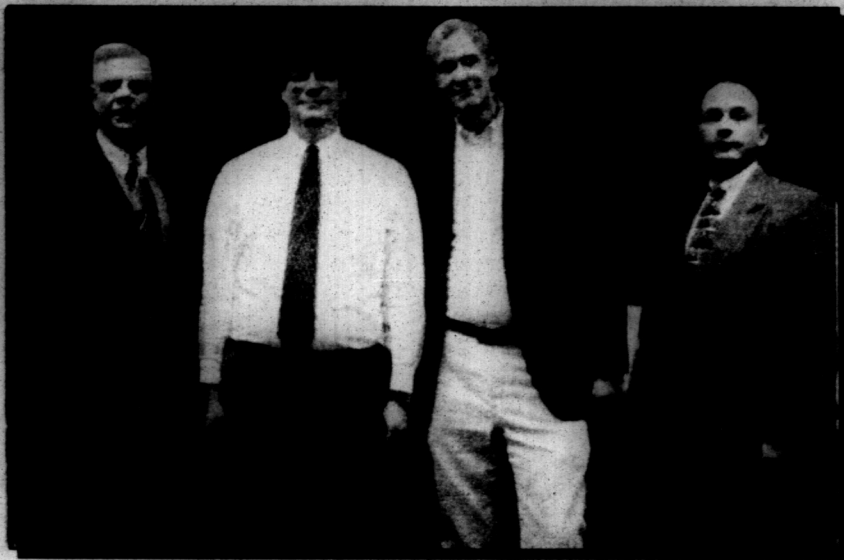
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The members of Mt. Moriah Church, Bogue Chitto, that accepted the challenge to read through the Bible in the year 2000 (pictured from left, bottom row) are Mary Thornton, Kathy Leonard, Elsie Hart, and Regina McCaffrey; (top row) Thomas Thornton; Freddie Leonard; and Danny Moss, pastor.

Timothy Leigh Parker, a native of Philadelphia and pastor of Montgomery Church, Summit, received the master of divinity degree in pastoral ministry on Dec. 16 at New Orleans Seminary. He is a graduate of Clarke College and Mississippi College.

Deacon ordination service was held for Allen Austin on Feb. 4 at Parkway Church, Hernando. Pictured (from left) are Barney Austin, (candidate's uncle); Allen Austin; Jim Austin (deacon vice-chairman and candidate's father), and Mike Ramage, pastor of Parkway Church.



B. Austin, A. Austin, J. Austin, and Ramage



Howell and Snyder

Agricola Church, Lucedale, licensed Caleb Howell (left) to the ministry on Nov. 12. Tommy Snyder, pastor, is pictured with Howell.

Kevin Chrestman was licensed to the ministry by Mt. Moriah Church, Bruce, on Dec. 6. Chrestman is available for pulpit supply and can be reached at (662) 983-2709. Pictured (from left) are Max Price, pastor, and Chrestman.



Price and Chrestman

Center Ridge Church, Yazoo City, recently honored Barbara McGinty at a reception on the occasion of her retirement after having served 30 years as church secretary. McGinty can be contacted at 37 Witherspoon Road, Yazoo City, MS 39194. Pictured with McGinty is Mike Sutton, pastor.



Sutton and McGinty

Baptists helping survivors of new earthquake

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (BP) — Southern Baptists missionaries and volunteers already aiding survivors of January's deadly earthquake in El Salvador immediately began responding to the powerful new

quake that hit the Central American nation Feb. 13.

The latest temblor, registering 6.6 on the Richter scale, struck in the morning as many people were heading for work. It killed more than 170 people

and injured at least 1,600 while inflicting major damage on three districts near the capital city of San Salvador.

"We already have a couple of thousand nice, warm blankets in our warehouse that we had

not yet passed out" to survivors of the Jan. 13 quake, reported Southern Baptist missionary Mark Grumbles from San Salvador on Feb. 13.

"We've already given out 4,000 blankets, and these are received with great enthusiasm as people are sleeping outside in makeshift shelters of plastic, tin, or cardboard if they can get it.

"We've helped to provide plastic and food to about 2,000 families as well," he said.

Disaster relief volunteers sent by Texas Baptist Men to help clean up and provide drinking water to a town hit by the previous quake "got a scare" when the new quake hit, Grumbles said.

"They are all safe — just about everything in that town had fallen down last month," Grumbles reported.

"A team from California and Alabama was doing the same work last week. Baptist Men from North and South Carolina are preparing to come this month, too," he said.

Contributions toward the relief effort can be sent to IMB, General Relief Fund — El Salvador Earthquake, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230.

Staff changes

First Church, Mathiston,



Ingram

has called Lowell D. Ingram as pastor effective Feb. 5. A native of Memphis, Tenn., Ingram received his education at Mississippi State University, New Orleans Seminary, and Columbia Theological Seminary. His previous place of service was Cato Church, Rankin County.

Vardaman Church, DeKalb, has called Jessie L. Napp of Meridian as pastor, effective Jan. 1.

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Las Vegas: big numbers not only in casinos

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (Special) — Isaiah Mejia knows the stakes are high in Las Vegas. Six-figure numbers race through his mind nearly every day, but you won't find Mejia pulling levers on slot machines, rolling a pair of dice in game of craps, or anxiously hovering over a spinning roulette wheel. "I can't forget 777,000," said Mejia. "I can't forget that number."

That's the number of people in Las Vegas who profess no religious preference or affiliation whatsoever. "The only way that they know God is in a curse word," Mejia said.

Of the city's 1.5 million inhabitants, only five percent claim to be Christians. Just over one percent are Southern Baptists.

As a North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary, Mejia, however, still likes his odds. "Our churches here live on the cutting edge, meeting people where they are," he said. "It's the law of survival, if you don't you die."

Mejia and his wife of 20 years, Jan, are among the missionaries featured in the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11.

"We're discovering and looking for ways the church can effectively penetrate the community to share the Gospel," Mejia said.

As a ministry evangelism specialist with the Southern Nevada Baptist Association, Mejia coordinates evangelistic outreach ministries at ritzy skyscraper casino-hotels on the neon-lit Las Vegas Boulevard, the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, Lake Mead campground — home to the second largest man-made lake in the world — and tourist magnet Hoover Dam.

By practicing what Mejia calls "street evangelism" at major entertainment, resort, and leisure venues, local churches are able to reach the unchurched masses.

"People are not beating your door down," he said. "They don't want in your church. They don't care what you do there. If your relationship with Jesus Christ has not transformed you they don't want what you've got."

Mejia came to Las Vegas in 1998 after serving as director of church and community ministries with the Neuse Baptist Association in LaGrange, N.C. Since then he has helped Southern Baptist churches here share the life-changing message of Jesus Christ through events such as Vacation Bible



MAKING PLANS — Missionary Isaiah Mejia (center) shares a moment with director of missions Harry Watson (left) and Cecilia Grigsby (right). The three were meeting to help find a pastor for a new ministry that was being established. (Photo By Gibbs Frazier)

School, evangelistic block parties, after-school programs, ministries to the hungry and illiterate, and concerts.

In a city where nearly everything glitters Mejia said it is often the simplest acts of kindness — such as handing out cups of cold water, hot coffee, free gifts or providing diaper-changing and infant-feeding stations at outdoor events — that make people receptive to the Gospel message.

"People are receptive and warm and curious," he said. "They're seeking, but they're not interested in your God, they're not interested in what he can do, they're interested in what he's doing in your life."

Recognized as the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas attracts 36 million tourists each year. Yet, Mejia said, the city's bright lights only mask a spiritual darkness evidenced by its high divorce rate, suicide rate, and proliferation of prostitution and illegal drug use.

During 2001, NAMB is conducting its Strategic Focus Cities initiative throughout Las

Vegas aimed at evangelizing the city and starting new churches.

Despite its reputation as "Sin City" or the modern-day Sodom and Gomorah, Mejia said people in Las Vegas have the same needs of people everywhere. "They're people for whom Christ died," he said.

They keep moving to Las Vegas, Mejia said citing a net gain of about 5,000 new residents each month, according to Census records.

"People are looking for family values, a better community for their families," Mejia said.

A west Texas native from a missionary family with seven sisters and four brothers, Mejia knows from experience that lasting family values are discovered when Christ is the foundation.

Mejia's parents were church planters with the former Home Mission Board for 20 years. He professed Christ as Savior at nine years of age.

Following graduation from Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, Mejia taught high school chorus, band, and Spanish for a few years before

entering full-time Christian ministry in the early 1980's.

He served on staff in churches in Texas and North Carolina as minister of music, youth, and education. A 1993 graduate of Southeastern Seminary, Mejia served as pastor of a new Hispanic church start in LaGrange, N.C., and at First Church, LaGrange.

Mejia asked that Southern Baptists prayerfully search their hearts to see if God might be calling them to serve him more in their own communities or possibly even in Las Vegas.

Mejia said Southern Baptists also have the opportunity to help reach Las Vegas through their giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

"Mission giving is literally securing the opportunity for one of those 777,000 folks who have no religious adherence whatsoever an opportunity to respond to the Gospel," he said.



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(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

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BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

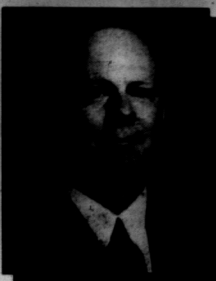
William Carey College will present "Fine Work Guaranteed": The Studio Photography of F. S. McKnight, 1894-1930, Aberdeen. This traveling exhibition from Aberdeen's Evans Memorial Library features over 110 black and white silver gelatin prints. These were selected from 13,975 images made by Francis Summerfield McKnight, a studio photographer in Aberdeen. "Fine Work Guaranteed" will open at 5 p.m. on March 1 and continue through March 30 at the Lucile Parker Gallery located in the Thomas Fine Arts Center on campus in Hattiesburg. There is no admission charge. Regular gallery hours are 1-4 p.m., Monday-Friday. For more information concerning "Fine Work Guaranteed," call (601) 582-6192.



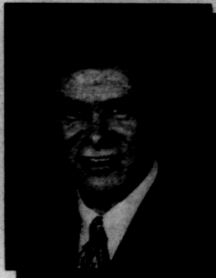
Photography of F.S. McKnight

Mississippi College Library Associates meeting, March 4 at 2 p.m., will feature George Thatcher of Gulfport, author of "Beach Walks" and "Beach Walks II," as the guest speaker. For more information, contact David Wright at (601) 925-3438.

Four William Carey College (WCC) alumni were honored with the prestigious Service Award during the 2001 Homecoming Awards Luncheon held recently on the Hattiesburg campus. Awarded to alumni of WCC, this recognition acknowledges the recipients' dedication to community service. Honored were William "Billy" Browning of Laurel; David Bush of Hattiesburg; Lynda Jackson, a native of Marion County; and Jim Smith of Pétal.



Browning

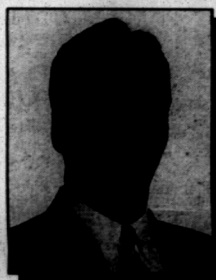


Bush

Blue Mountain College (BMC) recently announced the winners of the 2000-2001 Creative Writing contest. Students submitted writings in five different categories: poetry, short story, formal essay, informal essay, and one-act plays. Winners are Priya Redmond-Rogan, Robin Morton, Maria Teel, Emily Newton, Sonia Jones, Andrea Gunn, Amanda Howard, Virginia Hearn, Shanna Wilbanks, Gena Camburn, Dana Conn, Mary Hutson, Heather Smith, Cristy Turner, Abigail Gunn, and Rena Haynes. All of the compositions above will be published in April in The Mountain Breeze, the student literary journal at BMC. Heather Smith's design was chosen for the cover of The Mountain Breeze.



Jackson



Smith

The William Carey College Black Student Association (BSA) Plus will host a Gospel Fest March 2 at 7 p.m. in the Dumas Smith Auditorium on the Hattiesburg campus. Approximately 10 gospel groups from the Hattiesburg and surrounding area will participate in the event. Tickets are \$3 and can be purchased at the door. Proceeds from the Gospel Fest will go to the BSA Plus. For more information call Yolanda Jenkins at (601) 582-6266, or Mary Beth Bankson at (601) 582-6444.

Virginia "Jenny" Norwood of Hazlehurst was crowned the 2001 William Carey College homecoming queen during festivities held recently on the Hattiesburg campus. A senior religion major, Norwood is a church-related vocations scholarship recipient. She is a member of the Baptist Student Union, Omicron Kappa Delta Honor Society, and has maintained a dean's list academic standing. A graduate of Copiah-Lincoln Community College, she is the daughter of Robert and Debbie Norwood. The court, elected by the student body, included senior maids Jeannie Michelle Miller of Pensacola, Fla. and Tamara Brianne Roberts of Pace, Fla. Junior maids were Tiffanie Nicole Cooper of Slidell, La. and Keri Elizabeth Norwood of Hazlehurst. Sophomore maids were Valerie Suzanne Brewer of Brandon and Stephanie Jill Ogle of Hattiesburg. Freshman maids were Stephanie Rae Dickens of Seminary and LaDonna Kay Ferguson of Laurel.

James T. Hannaford, dies at age 80

James Thomas Hannaford Jr., 80, died Feb. 5. Hannaford served as minister of music and associate pastor at First Church, Moss Point, for 32 years. He previously served Central Church, Hattiesburg; First Church, Tupelo; Eden Church, Denham Springs, La.; and First Church, Columbia. Hannaford is survived by his wife of 54 years, Pearl Conaway Hannaford of Moss Point; sons, David H. Hannaford of Baltimore, Md., and Jim Hannaford of Nashville, Tenn.; daughter, Jan Hannaford Webb of Metepec, Mexico; brother, Cecil W. Hannaford of Dunwoody, Ga.; and three grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the J. T. Hannaford Memorial Fund of First Church, Moss Point.

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Church planter confronts barriers to Gospel

MONTREAL, Quebec, Canada (Special) — Many North American missionaries see themselves as being ambassadors for Christ. Georges Boujakly also sees himself as being an ambassador for Southern Baptists.



BRISK WALK — Georges Boujakly (left), a church planter strategist in Quebec, discusses strategy during a brisk winter walk with fellow North American missionary David Brazzeal near his home. (Photo by Phil Carpenter)

That's because in Canada where he serves, Southern Baptists — or any evangelical faith group — are clearly in the minority. In the new millennium, faith based on scriptural absolutes is out; post-modernism and its culture of relative truth are in.

"Quebec Province is the most post-modern society in North America," he says with a tone of heaviness in his voice.

Boujakly, a church planter strategist, and his wife, Carolyn, are featured during the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11.

As he drives around the city looking for places to plant a new congregation, he is constantly reminded of the barriers to the Gospel. Symbols of Christianity are everywhere and serve as anchors of the French Catholic heritage of its past.

Churches stand tall and proud with spires pointing heavenward, but they are largely empty, visited by a handful of the faithful and given lip service, if that, by the majority of the population.

"Forty years ago the 'Silent Revolution' started in our universities. It began not by teaching against the Catholic Church, but by teaching beyond a religious framework or perspective," Boujakly explains.

"Up until then all of Quebecois life was dominated by the Catholic Church. ...The students didn't demonstrate in the streets, they didn't seek media attention for their cause; they simply dropped out of church, one by one."

Today it's a different society that greets internationals to this province — which considers itself a distinct nation and is known for its European-style cities and natural beauty. It's a society that has relegated the church to the bottom of the heap like some cast off old coat. It's a society where 55% of children are born out of wedlock to couples living together, and the abortion rate is the highest in the western world.

"Thirty-five percent of all pregnancies end in abortion in this province," Boujakly said.

Quebec has more New Age bookstores than the rest of Canada combined. The people are searching, he says, but they don't know it's Christ whom they are searching for.

All of this can be found in a province which professes to be 91% Catholic, but where only 11% practice the faith.

Quebec is also different in its secular history, Boujakly said. It's the only French-speaking province in Canada, and is acknowledged as a co-founding nation in the history of the country. The French settled the territory, but eventually lost out to the English in a series of battles. The rivalry is long-standing and remains a point of contention between the two national influences. Not only is Quebec the only French-speaking province, but French is the mandated official language.

Into this mix of secular and religious turmoil, Canadian Southern Baptists are trying to reach their countrymen for Christ. Boujakly, as a church starter strategist, until recently was the lone missionary in a province that is just beginning to learn about Southern Baptists.

He may not be a native of Quebec — which would make him a blue blood in the eyes of many — but he is part of that large immigrant population which the nation encourages to flock to its shores.

In 1969, on the eve of war in the Middle East, Boujakly immigrated to Canada as had other skilled workers before him. Canada has always courted the immigration of skilled workers as a way to build its population base through a highly selective immigration policy, and his woodcarving skills were in demand — but moving to Canada from his native Beirut, Lebanon, with just \$30 in his pocket, took some adjustment.

"The night I landed in Edmonton, in Alberta Province where my brother lived, the temperature was minus 30 degrees. I almost got back on the plane and returned home," he said with a laugh.

He stayed, and eventually became a foreman in a cabinet-making shop in Calgary. He accepted Christ through the ministry of students from Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon who were in town for the summer doing mission work at another church.

After graduating from the University of Calgary and Southwestern Seminary, he became a church planter in Cochran and eventually moved to Montreal about 10 years ago to help start churches.

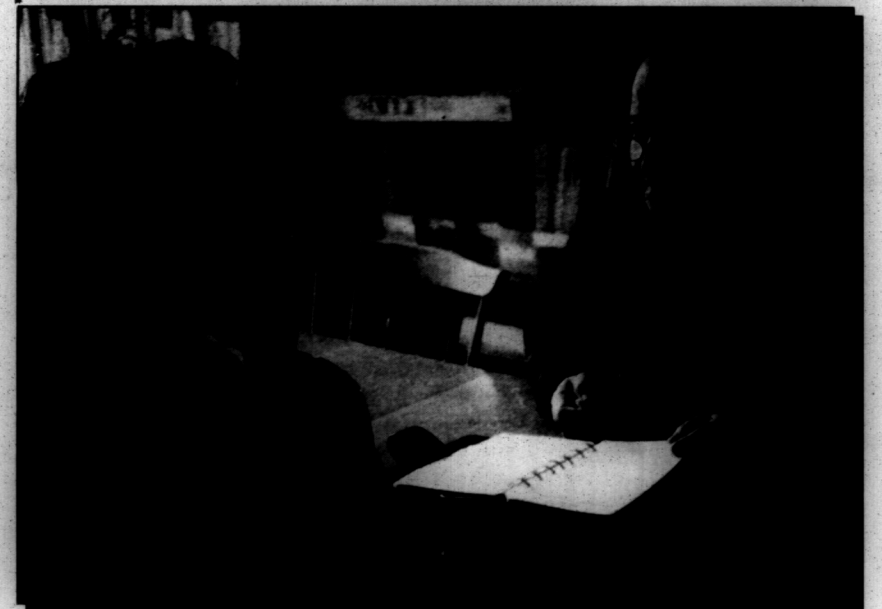
His French-speaking ability helped him meet the qualifications for the position.

"There were eight churches when Carolyn and I moved here, and now there are 22," he says. The couple regularly prays for more missionaries to help with the workload, and God has raised up other workers to help them lay the foundation for more churches through building a strong base of lay leadership.

"In order to bring our ratio down from one church for every 28,000 Quebecois to the desired one for every 2,000, we need to start 10,000 churches immediately," he said.

There are just not enough funds for that, "but we can accomplish much by training leaders within our churches to accept the responsibility of starting other congregations. That's why we have to rethink what church is," he stressed.

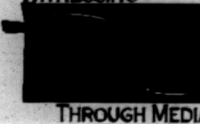
ANNIE ARMSTRONG
CHRISTIAN OFFICER



BUSY SCHEDULES — Georges Boujakly (right), a church planter strategist in Quebec, compares schedules with fellow missionary David Brazzeal. The pair lead the lives of busy missionaries in their Canadian posting. (Photo by Phil Carpenter.)

WITNESSING THROUGH MEDIA AWARDS

WITNESSING



THROUGH MEDIA

Sponsored by the Mississippi Baptists in Broadcasting organization, the 2001 Witnessing Through Media Awards program has been created to recognize radio and video productions which demonstrate excellence in message design and production in helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

If your church is involved in a radio or video production from March 1, 2000 – March 1, 2001, why not think of entering this year's awards program.

"We have had some outstanding creative work done by Mississippi churches in the past and I know this year will be no exception," says Farrell Blankenship, director, Department of Broadcast Services.

For more information or to obtain an entry form, please call (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3378.

Entry deadline is March 16, 2001.

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Mentoring not just concept for missionary

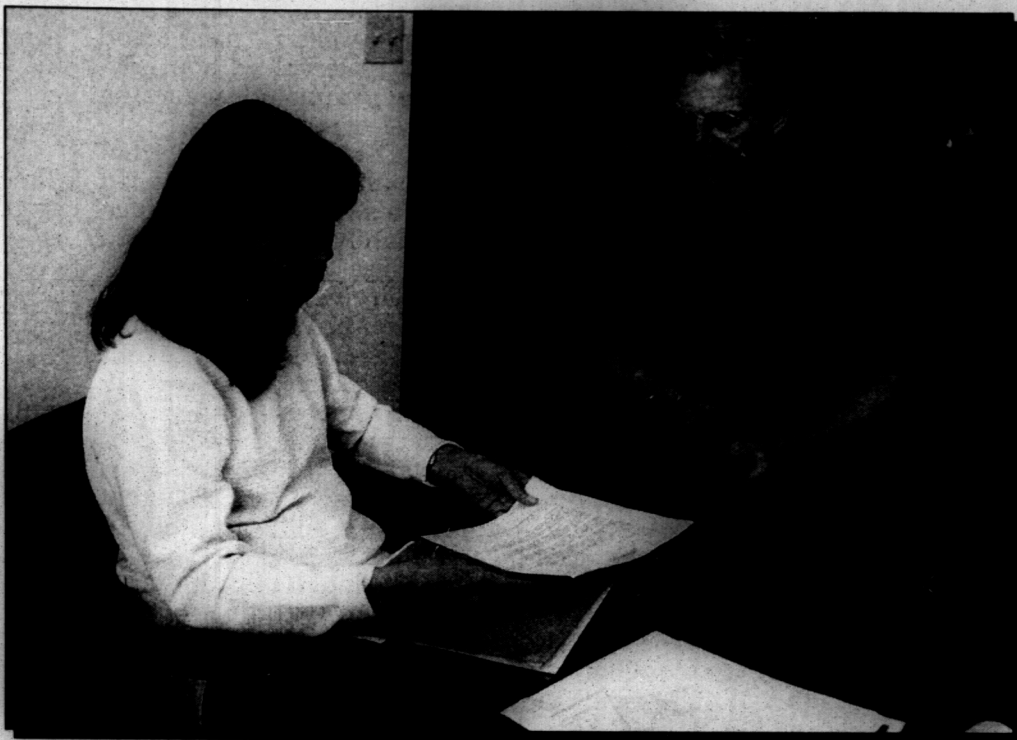
LARKSPUR, Colo. — Allan Karr learned the importance of mentor relationships early on, when at 15 years old a man by the name of Jon Cook befriended him and helped him discover God's plan for his life.

"He saw a young man with potential and made a conscious decision to invest his life and energy and time into mine, and the relationship that we developed and the discipling that took place has become foundational for who I am as a minister," said Karr.

That discipling also has become the foundation of Karr's latest role. As Nehemiah Project director at Golden Gate Seminary and a North American missionary, Karr oversees a network of church planters and their mentors across the western United States.

He helps ensure that they receive the combination of seminary education and practical one-on-one interaction that helps God use them to further his kingdom.

"As a professor I have become increasingly aware that



GOOD ADVICE — Allan Karr (right) counsels with student Lillie Lin in his office at the Denver campus of Golden Gate Seminary. Photo By James Dotson.

the intentional investment that one makes in the lives of people who are sometimes overlooked can oftentimes have tremendous potential for the kingdom — if only someone would take the time to develop them," he said.

Karr, and his wife Kathy are featured missionaries during the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions. From his base at the Denver campus of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Karr travels to each of Golden Gate's regional campuses in Phoenix; Vancouver, Wash.; Denver; Los Angeles; and San Francisco. A typical semester will find him teaching two to three classes weekly in two of the five cities, in addition to other appointments.

He also spends much of his time working to promote church planting throughout the West, including speaking at conferences, teaching at "Basic Training" training seminars for new church planters, and helping plan strategy with associations and state conventions.

"The good thing is I have a real heart and passion for church planting ... and that makes it real easy," Kathy said. "The methods that we used to start the church creates a lot of activity in our home, and so in that respect I had a great involvement. Allan and I worked at it as a team."

In the summer of 1999, however, Karr took his current position as Nehemiah Project director at Golden Gate seminary — giving him the opportunity of applying the knowledge he had gained about effective church planting. He also remained in touch with the needs of church planters by serving as interim pastor of a new congregation in Aurora, Colo., following his involvement at Castle Valley.

"To have credibility to the postmodern church planter, one must be involved in it firsthand," Karr said. "Church planters do not want to hear stories about how you did it 20 years ago. They want to know how you do it now to reach people."

The Nehemiah Project was begun in 1998 by the North American Mission Board as a way to better equip its church

planters, integrating a focused seminary curriculum with two-year internships.

"The Nehemiah Project is designed to ... address some of the deficiencies of church planting strategies of the past, namely that church planters oftentimes were not adequately prepared when they went out into the field," Karr said.

The system provides both a mentor for each church planter and group of fellow church planters that can support each other, he said.

Typically, he said, planting a church can be "like a roller coaster ride," with tremendous highs and lows of success and perceived failure.

"During that time of ups and downs you have to be able to be wired to be resilient and bounce

back. When it gets to the lows, it always helps to have a friend to lean on and that's my mentor. In the whole process of understanding how important that person was for me... I have endeavored to be that way for other people as well and I see myself as a mentor — even in my role as a Nehemiah professor."



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

I'm not a hedonist, but I do like walking on the wild side of life. Why should that be incompatible with my Christianity?

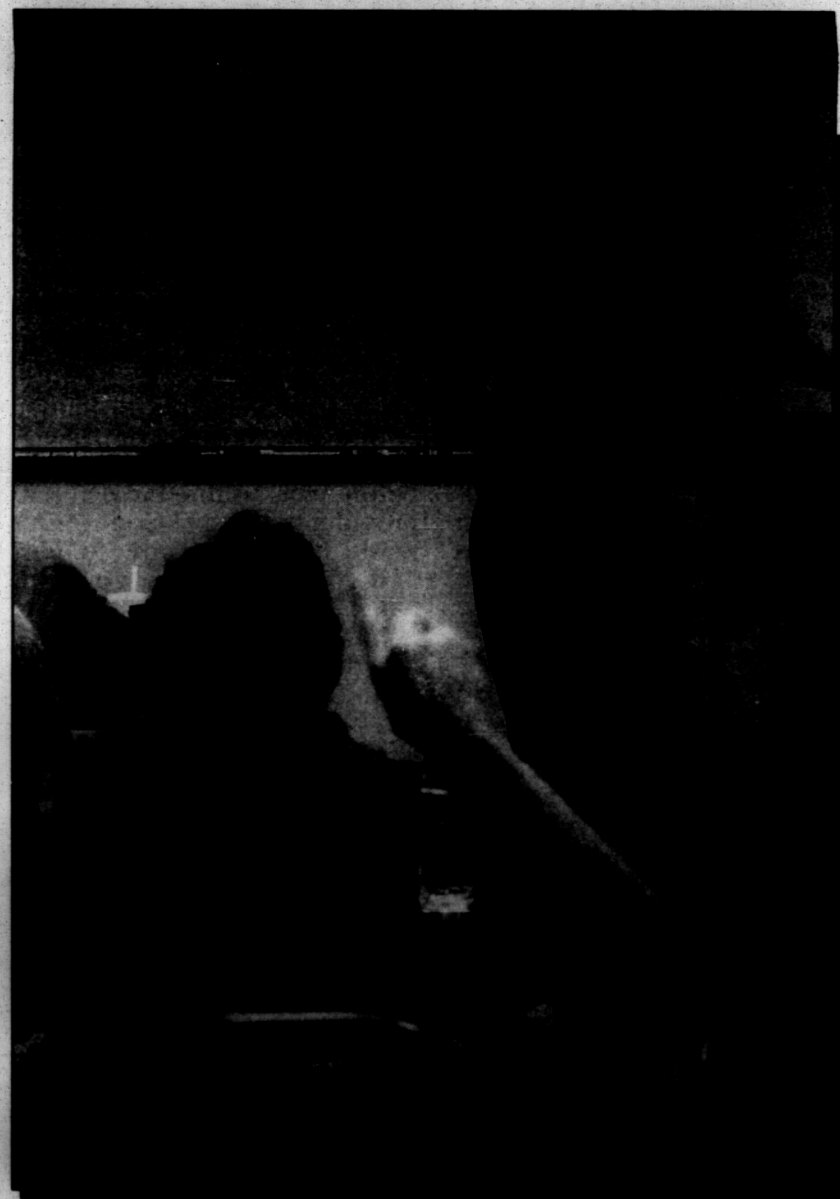
Christianity is not about a lot of "thou-shall-nots" where the world is concerned, but about following Christ. God the Father and his son Jesus are not asking you to be a prude, just their follower. Jesus addresses this in Luke 12. After he tells the story of the rich fool who is going to tear down his barns to build bigger ones, the man says in verse 19, "I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.'" Verses 20-21 state, "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'" There is more to life than material indulgence. If you are trying to stay on the fence between God and the world, you'll get pretty exhausted. Many people who are trying to "find" themselves according to worldly standards end up losing themselves,

because of poor choices. The way the Father leads is the best way, and the one in which you will find the most comfort.

My husband, otherwise known as a pillar of the community and church, doesn't practice what he preaches when it comes to his private life. Would the shame of public exposure make him shape up?

Possibly, but before you go there you should attempt to find out what is going on in his life that is causing the discrepancy. Have you confronted him? Have you prayed for him? Is there a close friend who could have some input that could make a difference before you go public? What about talking with your pastor? Follow the dictates of Matt. 18:15-20. Pray about this before you do anything. Listen carefully to his words and actions, and ask for the Lord's discernment in the direction you should choose. Also, study Matt. 7:3-5. Make sure you're on solid ground yourself before acting against someone else. Move slowly, be quick to listen, and be slow to speak (James 1:19).

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. In central Mississippi, Ron Mumbower can be heard from 9-10 a.m. each Wednesday on WHJT-FM-93.5. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.



SEMINARY SESSION — Allan Karr (standing) teaches an evening Foundations of Ministry class at the Denver campus of Golden Gate Seminary. As Nehemiah Project director and a North American missionary, Karr teaches at all five of the seminary's campuses. (Photo By James Dotson)

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Bringing others to Jesus

Mark 2:1-12

By Lori Clendinning

Consider the frustrations of a broken down car. Oftentimes, fixing it requires an unplanned trip to an auto repair shop, thus the car is towed to a mechanic who applies his expertise in order to get the vehicle back onto the road.

Involved in an accident or other legal infraction, the car would be towed to a police impound where it would remain — in broken down condition — until its release.

Regarding broken down lives, only Jesus, the master repairman, has the authority to release people from sin's impoundment. Only Jesus can restore them from broken down status to serviceable condition. Considering that, Christians are often the "tow trucks" that God uses to bring damaged people to him for restoration.

When suffering, defeated people are deplete of any ability to appeal to God, "tow-ers" are required to help transport them into God's "repair shop." Often that means praying steadfastly for them, thus moving them spiritually into God's presence or by physically bringing them to places where they may encounter God's Word, such as Sunday School classes or Bible studies.

Similarly, working as "tow-ers" requires a selfless, "on-call for duty" attitude. Caring for hurting, lost people and bringing them to Christ requires sacrificing individual comfort and moving beyond personal embarrassment. This selfless act of bringing others to Jesus is vividly seen in this week's lesson.

Rejected at Nazareth, Jesus continued his ministry among



Clendinning

Galileans from a Capernaum-based headquarters. Possibly the home of Simon Peter, the house from which Jesus preached was crammed full of people.

Typical of Galilean homes, the house likely had a common external stairway leading to a flat roof made of saplings across the top of the house, with smaller sticks criss-crossing over them. Over this was a sundried mixture of mud and clay.

The four men who labored to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus determined to get him within a finger's touch of a miracle. Ripping open the roof wasn't difficult and undoubtedly the crowd made room for the lowered pallet when debris began showering upon them.

The faith that these men had in Jesus' ability to heal their afflicted friend and their dogged determination in delivering him delighted Jesus, eventually resulting in two things: the man was healed and his sins forgiven.

Yet, Jesus departed from his

usual manner of healing. He perceived the man's sinful state as the greater need and addressed it first without giving any command regarding his physical healing.

The divine authority that Jesus claimed to have by stating the man's sins were forgiven immediately caused concern among the religious leaders. Jesus perceived their thoughts and confronted them by asking, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." (vv. 9-10) and then authorized physical healing.

By healing the man, Jesus proved the validity of his words of forgiveness via the power of his words of healing. Certainly, if Jesus could cure physical afflictions, he could divinely exonerate sins, and did so, not as a prophet or God's hireling, but as the Son of Man, who has authority on earth to absolve sins.

Calling himself the Son of Man referred to the Daniel 7

passage regarding the forthcoming Messiah. "...there before me was one like a son of man... He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power..." (vv. 13-14).

By claiming this title, Jesus directly conflicted with the religious leaders' beliefs: by speaking as though his own voice was that of God's; by declaring he had the power to forgive sins; and by indicating that the forgiveness of sins could take place in the here and now, instead of complying with the Hebraic belief that forgiveness of earthly sins would take place only after death.

The faith and determination of the four friends must have buoyed Jesus through this time of growing persecution and rejection by religious leaders. Undoubtedly, this type of faith, despite criticism from others, pleased Christ and resulted in the glorification of God. May our faith today equally delight him as we tow others into his presence.

Clendinning is a former newspaper editor and a member of Park Place Church, Pearl.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Insecurity

Ruth 2:1-4:22

By Jim Burnett

Currently our nation's economy is experiencing turbulence. The threat of recession is in the air. Daily, thousands of people nervously study the stock market, wondering how their investments are performing, and worrying whether or not there will be sufficient retirement funds.

All ears are attuned to Mr. Greenspan and the prospects of another interest rate cut. Natural gas prices have skyrocketed, causing many to choose between being warm this winter or having food. Company downsizing is now a weekly occurrence, causing much job insecurity.

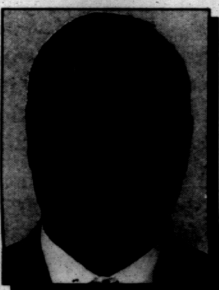
In world news the United States bombed Baghdad in February. Will Saddam Hussein

retaliate? Will he terrorize our airports, blow up government buildings, launch nuclear warheads toward our major cities?

Because insecurities and uncertainties plague life, we need to revisit the awesome story of Naomi and Ruth and refresh our memory as to how God provided for these two ladies in unstable times.

Seeking security (3:1). As Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, immediately the providential care of God was at work. Naomi encouraged her daughter-in-law to go and work in Boaz's field, the same field that Ruth had happened into the previous day as recorded in 2:3.

Obviously God had led Ruth to the field of Boaz but he also



Burnett

did a work in the heart of Boaz as reflected in the treatment Ruth received from this man.

Truly Boaz was the kinsman-redeemer to Naomi and Ruth. He saved them from starvation and spared them humiliation associated with having no offspring. Therefore, Boaz serves as a prototype of Christ.

Jesus came as our kinsman-redeemer, sacrificing himself on a cross to save us from our sins and meet our needs. Have you allowed Jesus to forgive your sins and meet your needs?

Have you found Paul's statement about Christ to be true: "my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19 NASB)? I have and today I know that regardless of my uncertainties and insecurities Jesus will take care of me.

Acting boldly (3:6-11). Ruth's confidence in Naomi is clearly seen as she obeyed every detail of her mother-in-law's instructions concerning Boaz.

Humbly Ruth made her way to the threshing floor, uncovered Boaz's feet, and laid down. This was her way of inviting Boaz to marry her. During the night Boaz awoke and found Ruth lying at his feet. He asked her identity, and Ruth responded and explained what she was doing there.

Boaz was moved by Ruth's spirit of humility and blessed her for being a woman of excellence, for Ruth had not rushed out hastily to marry the first available breadwinner. She had waited on God's plan. As she left Boaz, he filled her cloak with six measures of barley.

It took a lot of guts to do what Ruth did, but her audacious actions were rewarded as Boaz took her to be his wife. Their union led to the birth of Obed, the grandfather of David, whose lineage is traced to the birth of Jesus. God's children will never go wrong and never end up empty-handed when they act boldly in following God.

We are living in insecure times when people are running scared. The children of God,

however, have no reason to fear. Our Father holds the entire world and its resources in his hands, and he will not withhold anything we need.

Rejoicing thankfully (4:13-14, 17). What a contrast we see in the life of Naomi from 1:19-21 and 4:13-14. Within a couple of months of her return to Bethlehem, God had wiped away her grief and erased her fears. He had refilled her heart with joy and hope.

God's blessings on Naomi overflowed to the entire city, for the women of Bethlehem voiced in one accord God's favor upon Naomi. They knew the marriage of Boaz and Ruth and the birth of Naomi's grandson was God's handiwork.

What a wonderful God we serve! He can take the worst and ugliest of human experiences and transform them into a trophy display of his grace.

Would you allow God to do that with your hurts and pains, your disappointments and bruises?

Burnett is pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,



no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director

P.O. Box 27

Clinton, MS 39060-0027

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of *The Village View* is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 1-31, 2000 MEMORIALS

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Mr. Marvin Williams
J. L. Cody
Wayne Williams
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Smith
Willie Williams
Galilee First Baptist Church
Men's SSC-Galilee BC
Donna Williamson
Jean O'Brien
Bessie B. Wilson
Lindsay & Emma Lampton
Sidney Wilson
Mary Jean Reddick

Billie Lynn & Lamar Arthur
Mrs. Wesley Wilson
Irene Sanders
Ruth & Sylvester Withers
Faye Kelly
Mr. George Womack
Spring Hill BC-Wesson
Beulah Catledge Wood
Eddie Morgan
Mr. Johnston Wood
Mr. Dan Nixon
Mr. Nelson Wood
Mrs. Jewell M. Smith
Mr. Frank Wright
Alton & Vangie Fields
Mr. Alton Yarbrough
Ron & Jean Yarbrough
Max J. Young
Roy Moore
Troy Younger
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Hendrix

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Liberty BC Deacons, Pastor & Staff
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Mr. & Mrs. Jess H. Dickinson
Mrs. Maurice Boone
Rev. & Mrs. Howard T. Scarborough
Mr. & Mrs. Ellis Brewer
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Mrs. Davis Clark
Mr. & Mrs. Allen W. Clark II
Mrs. Clinton Clem
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Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Miller
Mrs. Curtis Hall
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Mrs. Joyce King
Mrs. Myra Van Norman
Liberty Baptist Church
Cheryl Leigh Perkins
Pam & Eddie Helms
Mary Lynn Perkins
Pam & Eddie Helms
Ivy & Thelma Rawson
Mr. & Mrs. Jess H. Dickinson
Rev. & Mrs. G. C. Sansing
Virginia Cox & Fly, David, Jody & Sharon
Velma Shoemaker
Alathean SSC, FBC-Collins
Kirk Taylor
Mr. & Mrs. Zachary Taylor III
Ms. Patricia T. White
Mary Jane Thach
Mr. & Mrs. Cliff Thach
(Clifton & Taylor)
Mrs. Myra Van Norman
Billie Ann Welch
Miss Mary Edith Waggoner
Mr. & Mrs. Rice Henry Maddox
Mrs. Lodena Waggoner
Mr. & Mrs. Rice Henry Maddox

JANUARY 1-31, 2001 MEMORIALS

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Lemmie Aldridge
Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Tuggle
Hubert L. Alexander
Mr. & Mrs. Jack D. Sumrall
Mr. & Mrs. Woodrow Pack
Dr. and Mrs. William B. Thompson
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Mr. & Mrs. E. E. Reynolds
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Mr. & Mrs. Max Klaus
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Wilkins Dedwylder
Mr. & Mrs. Stuart V. Allen
James Arthur Dees
Mr. & Mrs. E. C. Parsons
Stuart Denman, Sr.
SMGT. & Mrs. James E. Walters
Robert Lee Dominick



The Baptist Children's Village recently hosted a Children's Disciple Now weekend for residents of the India Nunnery Campus ages 12 and under. The children enjoyed food, games, pony rides, and most importantly discipleship.

Mr. & Mrs. Elwood L. Crain
Ms. Alice M. Dominick
Mrs. Herman Dukes
Ms. Alma Louise Smith
Mr. Toxie M. Dunaway
Ms. Fay M. Donegan
Mr. John B. Duncan
Mrs. Gladys M. Kelly
Ms. Peggy Williams
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Laura H. England
Mrs. Elizabeth H. Browning
Phillip R. Enochs
Craig O. Haskins Family
Hattie D. Evans
Smith's Machine & Welding Co., Inc.
Mrs. Ruby Evans
Mr. & Mrs. Josh Morris
Billy Faulkenberry
Mr. & Mrs. Troy L. King
Raymond D. Faulkner
Dr. & Mrs. W. D. Austin
Ruth Faulkner
Mr. & Mrs. J. D. Lynch
Don Feasel
Doug & Cara Moore
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Mrs. Celeste C. Truitt
Mr. Leroy Fitzhugh
Harold Chevrolet-Olds Co.
Lee Fortenberry
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Eva Franklin
Dr. & Mrs. Fred E. Tatum
Carrie Frazier
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Mrs. Lily Frazier
Mr. & Mrs. Stuart V. Allen
Mr. David Gamble
Harold Chevrolet-Olds Co.
Louise Gamblin
Mr. & Mrs. Billy W. Owen Sr.
Mr. & Mrs. George F. Pettey
Mr. Tommy Garrett
Ms. Ruth V. Whitt
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Sanderson
Mr. Harvey Gast
Mr. & Mrs. Willie Badon
Darryl Gibson
Ms. Diane Gibson
Parent of Mrs. Ben Graves
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Mr. & Mrs. Dennis L. McPhail
Mrs. Juawice Hamberlin
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Mr. James "Buddy" Haney, Jr.
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Ms. Hope H. Hawkins
Mary Hays
Cindy H Shackleford(Merrill Lynch)
Mr. O. J. Hays
Mrs. Shirley Hewitt
Mr. & Mrs. Stuart V. Allen
Dr. Jim Hendrick
Dr. & Mrs. J. Clark Hensley
L. H. Herberger
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Mrs. Louella Herren
Mrs. Imogene L. Penn
Clearance Herrington
Ms. Katie Holden
Argus Hester
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Billy Hewitt
Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Van Norman
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Hill
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Mrs. Billie Jean Holland
The Andrews Class, FBC-Shannon
Mr. & Mrs. Cecil Glen Polk
Holmes Holland
Dr. & Mrs. W. D. Austin
Mrs. Ray A. Whelan Jr.
Mrs. Pauline Holland
Mrs. A. B. Magee
W. B. Holmes
Mrs. C. D. Pollan
Mr. Clifford Huff
Mr. & Mrs. Weslie Causey
Mr. & Mrs. Troy L. King
Mr. & Mrs. Robert R. Waymire
Mr. Frank Hughes
Mr. Norman Weathersby Jr.



Robin Young, Medical Case Aid, of the Farrow Manor Campus recently received a one-year service pin.

Bibliocipher

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HPB NR JS THN, SKHS,
TKJEZ SKZQ TZDZ SKZDZ,
SKZ BHQN TZDZ HFFR-
LVEJNKZB SKHS NKZ NKR-
WEB AZ BZEJYZDZB.

EWXZ STR NJO

Clue: H = A

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Two: Nine.

Seafarer's ministry opens hearts in Samoa

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa — The incident was typical of many encountered by Rob and Sandra Stip at the Pago Pago Seafarer's Center. A ship's owners had a reputation for having "never paid a penny to anyone, and when the crew complained they were thrown off the ship, arrested, and deported," said Rob Stip.

A group of seafarers from the ship found shelter at the Seafarer's Center and became involved in intense Bible study and prayer. After 10 days, a fishing agent brought \$35,000 to the center and paid the men, saying, "What is it with this God of yours? I can't eat. I can't sleep. ...What is it going to take to make you guys happy?"

As directors of the center from 1998 until early this year, the Stips learned theirs would be much more than the ministry of passing out fruit punch and pool sticks that they had envisioned. They soon saw how God had uniquely equipped them for ministry in ways they had never imagined.

The Stips are among missionaries featured during the 2001 Week of Prayer for North American Missions, March 4-11.

Until early this year they served as Mission Service Corps volunteers at the seafarer's center, which has been operated by the North American Mission Board and the Hawaii-Pacific Baptist Convention since October 1995. The American Samoan experience was just the latest ministry effort of a family that has reached out to those they know best, those who prefer life on the water — and others who often don't seem to fit in to conventional society.

Rob Stip, in particular, is no stranger to living on the fringes. He grew up in the hills of Tennessee, and as a car thief at 17 was offered a choice of either military service in Vietnam or jail. He chose the military, and his familiarity with guns, hunting, and tracking handed down from his Cherokee Indian grandfather helped make him "very proficient in the art of war."

In the early 1980's he described himself as "not a nice person: drunk, antisocial, and very belligerent." The Stips owned a house initially, but ultimately felt confined on the land and moved to their boat.

One night, returning home from a bar, he sank his dinghy and was pulled out of the water by a man named Frank Mullins, president of Gospel Ship Ministries, and onto the ship "Saved By Grace." It was through that influence that Rob — and later his wife, Sandra — eventually came to faith in Christ.

"My marriage was falling apart. I just decided, 'What have I got to lose?' he said.

"It was like once I started listening and reading



SOOTHING TOUCH — Rob Stip (right) kisses a young girl's hand after tending to an infected cut on her leg. While director of the Pago Pago Seafarers' Center, Stip often ministered to minor medical needs of children who participate in the center's children's ministry. (Photo by James Dotson)

my Bible, everything that had gone wrong in my life I found a reason for it."

The transformation wasn't immediate, but Stip said the Holy Spirit eventually helped him submit to God's will in his life. He also felt called reaching out to others like them — first in the Tampa area, then back in South Florida, then in Beaufort, N.C.

With Intracoastal Waterfolk Ministries in Beaufort, they visited people on pleasure boats and conducted worship services — with Sandra drawing on her own talents as a musician in leading the musical part of the service and Rob serving as harbor chaplain. It was there that they became Mission Service Corps volunteers. Later, when they were asked about taking on the leadership of the Seafarer's Center in Samoa, they initially were reluctant but finally consented.

"It just scared us to death; we didn't think we were ready for this," Rob said, adding that God had worked it out. "I speak a little bit of seven different languages. My military background came into play in dealing with governments, and the languages and traveling experience helped in communicating with different cultures."

The routine at the center includes regular hours for recreation time for seafarers in port. They also operate a special international call center that allows seafarers to pay by the minute for calls to home at cheaper rates than would be available elsewhere.

"It's a clean, safe environment for international seafarers to come to for recreation and help, whether it be medical, legal, or spiritual," said Sandra Stip, "and we must be here on call for their needs 24 hours a day regardless of what their needs may be."

Ministry often starts with just the simple things: assisting with international phone calls, listening to seafarers talk about the families. "First we have to develop trust," Stip said. "...Once they develop this trust in you, then you can start ministering."

Last year more than a hundred seafarers made professions of faith through the ministry — many from countries where such decisions mean certain persecution even among their own shipmates. A Chinese mission that meets at the center includes many dedicated seafarers who have seen their faith forged by fire.

"There have been reports that some of them have been beaten unmercifully on these ships because of it — but they will not turn around," Stip said.

While the Stips initially saw their role as primarily one of hospitality and evangelistic ministry, opportunities for being advocates for the seafarers and others quickly began to appear.

On one occasion, several young Vietnamese women appeared at the center with the story of how their families had paid thousands of dollars for the right to work in promised high-paying jobs in American Samoa. When they arrived, they found only meager wages and intolerable working conditions. Because they were indentured workers, the management of their company felt justified in the abuse, the Stips said.

Police were called, investigations were conducted, and eventually some relief was secured. During the turmoil, Sandra helped found a Christian grassroots advocacy group called Concerned Citizens for Asian Workers that became an ongoing watchdog for injustices at the plant.

"The Samoan people have gotten together and said, 'How is it that we can live in a country where God is supposed to be in command and yet we are allowing young girls like this to be mistreated?'" Sandra said.

The youngest Stip, 12-year-old Scott, was the impetus for another aspect of their ministry targeted more at the local Samoans than either seafarers or immigrant workers. One of the first things the family noticed about the Samoan culture was that children are treated differently, often neglected and abused by mainland standards.

"My son came here and said, 'Dad, how can only adults be missionaries? Why can't kids?'" Rob said, "and I looked around at the crime, the drugs, the abuse, ... and we started working with kids on our day off."

The ministry settled into a one-hour Bible study each Saturday, followed by a couple of hours of free time for the children in the Seafarer's Center.

The Stips became role models for the children, not only sharing Christ with them and seeing many come to Christ, but also serving as surrogate teachers and parents.



LIFTING PRAISE — Sandra Stip plays keyboard during a Saturday children's ministry worship service at the Pago Pago Seafarers' Center in American Samoa. (Photo by James Dotson)